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Sen. Stamas fights to save school bus safety inspections

LANSING – School children and Michigan’s School Bus Safety Inspection program moved one step closer to being protected, announced state Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland.

The Senate passed a revised version of the Michigan State Police budget today that rejects Gov. Jennifer Granholm’s proposal to eliminate the program and to repeal the state law requiring school bus inspections.

“We need to do everything in our power to make sure the buses carrying our children to school are safe,” Stamas said.

The governor’s 2005-06 budget proposal called for the elimination of the State Police School Bus Inspection program, resulting in a projected savings of \$1.2 million. Additionally, the governor’s proposal also called for repealing the state law requiring school buses to be inspected on a regular basis.

“Michigan is facing a serious budget situation,” Stamas said. “But our children’s safety is not somewhere we should cut corners or economize.”

The program ensures that every Michigan school bus, more than 17,000 last year alone, is inspected annually by an expert maintenance crew.

According to a Michigan State Police report, approximately 4 percent, or more than 740 of the buses inspected last year, were “yellow tagged” – meaning they were found to have a defect that required repair within 60 days.

Last year, nearly 13 percent, or more than 2,100 buses, were “red tagged” – meaning they had defects so severe they were deemed unsafe to transport students and required immediate repair.

“When so many of our buses have severe defects and are deemed too dangerous to take our children to and from school, this is no time to eliminate a law that requires safety inspections to take place,” Stamas said.

Without the statewide program, schools that want their buses inspected would have to perform the inspections on their own or find the funds to pay the state to do so.

The budget bill now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.